Council of European Bishops' Conferences expresses solidarity with Russian Orthodox Church in the face of increased anti-Christain and anti-church sentiments

The Presidency of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae or CCEE) sent a letter to the DECR chairman, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, expressing their solidarity with the Russian Church in the face of anti-Christian and anti-church sentiments increased, in particular, in Russia in the recent months.

"...with regard to the numerous and increasing manifestations of discrimination against Christians in different countries and of anti-Christian and anti-church sentiments which have been increasing especially in the Russian Federation in the recent months, we would like first of all to assure you of our deep solidarity", - Catholic hierarchs write in the letter.

"During the last Plenary Assembly of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences last September, it was concluded that unfortunately in many European countries God is seen more and more as a private matter in culture, law and the public sphere, - they also say. – The CCEE Presidency is deeply convinced that this view is not at all respecting human dignity and furthermore it does not respect the concept of religious freedom as it is defined in international documents. Regarding this situation we share your concern about attacks on Christian places of worship and on Christian symbols in Russia in recent months."

The authors also "reject the tendency to misunderstand freedom of art and freedom of expression when there is in fact instigation or instrumentalization of religion for provocative purposes in order to damage religious peace or to incite hatred against religion or religious presence in public life."

The letter was signed by the President of CCEE, Péter Cardinal Erdő, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, and the CCEE Vice-presidents: Angelo Cardinal Bagnasko, Archbishop of Genoa, and Mgr. *Józef* Michalik, Archbishop of Przemyśl.

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